

# Formby Civic News



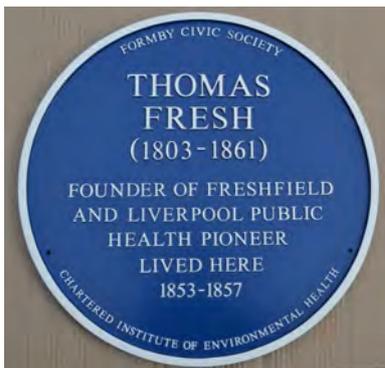
The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

Registered charity No 516789



## FORMBY'S FIRST BLUE PLAQUE

*In November 2014, one of the Society's projects came to fruition after months of planning and hard work; a joint project with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.*



A Blue Plaque was fixed to the front wall of Freshfield House, 95 Freshfield Road, the former home of Thomas Fresh, the 'founder' of Freshfield. The historic house is now the home of Barbara and Charles Jackson.

Thomas Fresh was responsible for



the building of the railway station which then took his name and which became the name of the whole local community. He improved and developed agriculture in this area, but his reputation extends to being one of Liverpool's mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Environmental Health heroes.

He lived at this address between 1853 and 1857. Originally a



farmhouse, it stood at the Northern end of Four Acre Lane at its intersection with Hill's Lane, (now known as Grange Lane). Four Acre Lane was then extended round the East end of the house to provide access to the new railway station and thereby took the new name of Freshfield Road.

**We are very grateful to the C.I.E.H for their financial support.**

May 2015

## Contents

History Group Report	2
Railway Crossings	3
Assets of Community Value	5
The Formby Home Front 1914 - 18	7
Laxton Cottage	8
Summer Programme	9
Wildlife Notes	10
AGM 2015	13
FCS Flickr Archive	14
FCS Programme	16

**WHY NOT JOIN IN SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES IN OUR SUMMER PROGRAMME?**

*Details of what is on offer can be found on back page!*

# THE HOME FRONT IN FORMBY

## 1914 - 1918

### A report on the Formby Civic Society Project

by

### John Phillips and Tony Pawson

With the anniversary of the start of the First World War upon us last August, a team of FCS members joined together to try to piece together what effect the opening year of the war had on the people of Formby. It was clear that probably the most significant effect would have been Formby sons and fathers joining up and setting off to France for what many at the time thought would be a conflict that would be 'over by Christmas'.



As we know with hindsight it was not the case and the troops would be in for a terrible conflagration that civilians generally had not imagined. However, that would not be the key focus for the project. What we wanted to know was how the developing conflict was having an impact on the lives of people in the village, the work undertaken in and around the village, the wish to support the soldier, the efforts to help integrate the troops who came to Formby to be trained and await their postings and the contribution to the war effort by ordinary folk either through their churches or other organisations.

The way the team approached this challenge was to work at Crosby Library, the home of historical records in Sefton. The excellent and supportive staff there showed us how to make best use of their new digital scanner for the task of reading through the back copies of the 'Formby Times' from the start of the war in 1914 to the end in November 1918. The team members agreed sections of time to cover, usually three months' worth of newspapers at a time, and selected relevant articles to be scanned as examples of what was happening in Formby through the whole time.



The scans were then kept in a file by another member of the team who also created a database of items for subsequent use when the time would come for presentations and the writing-up of the findings.

*The cuttings shown on these pages are taken from first editions of the Formby Times, in 1915. They have been copied from the microfilm on which they are recorded by means of a digital viewer. This machine then scans the area required to allow the researcher to keep copies of relevant material.*

*As can be seen, the scans are sometimes recorded slightly out of line. In time and with greater experience we will be able to correct this.*

As of May 2015 the team has reached almost the end of March 1917 and has just two years more to research.

Our enquiries have discovered issues that had an impact on the village such as the influx of so many troops, legal requirements such as 'black-outs' in all buildings and the knock on effects on farming and many other areas of employment of the local men-folk; the role of women in the Home Front can also be seen clearly with some evidence of women taking over the work of men. This topic gained extra importance with the introduction of conscription.

One other aspect that has not been ignored is the advertisements and the minutiae of the personal column.

**WAR. WAR. WAR.**

HOW TO ECONOMISE.

**BUY YOUR  
BREAD AT TICKLE'S**

FOR CASH AT COUNTER, AT  
1d. PER LARGE LOAF and 1d. PER  
SMALL LOAF, CHEAPER THAN  
FROM VANS.

—

SPLENDID QUALITY.

—

**TICKLE'S  
CROSS VIEW BAKERY**  
— AND —  
**4, QUEEN'S-ROAD,  
FORMBY.**

As we now remember the terrible sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915 we can find evidence of how the community of Formby was affected. The local newspapers reported all the deaths of Formby people on board Merseysides's beloved ship the 'Lucy'.

**BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS**

DEATH.  
MARSHALL. — James Marshall, beloved husband of Alice Marshall, Waterloo, and third son of Mrs. Marshall, Rimmer's-avenue, Freshfield, lost in the "Lusitania" Disaster, May 7th, aged 30.

The Newspaper also carried reports of deaths and injuries of Formby men at the Front as well as keeping readers informed about those Formby people 'joining-up'.

There were also regular reports on the Formby Roll of Honour that ended up as a publication over a whole page in the Formby times and has recently become a permanent monument in the grounds of Formby Pool. Have you seen the Monument yet? It is certainly worth a visit.

**FORMBY ROLL OF HONOUR.**

Driver E. Horsley, R.F.A., Wood Green, London, late Bridge Inn, Moss Side, Formby.

Herbert Cooper, Raven Meols-lane, R.A.M.L.

Jas. Reeves, late Queen's-road, Royal Navy.

Ed. Reeves, late Queen's-road, 6th Dragoons.

Geo. Reeves, late Queen's-road, Canadian Flying Corps.

The following have joined the Royal Engineers:—John Leadbetter, Blanchard's Cottages, Duke-street George Emmott and John Dawson, Liverpool-road; and James Brown, Ainsdale.

As you read through the copies of the 'Formby Times' month by month you find weekly updates to the Roll of Honour. The first names were printed in the edition for 12th September 1914 and there was a full-page publication on 20th March 1915. Further names were added, the above being published on 15th May 1915.

# History Group Report by Reg Yorke

## Meetings.

A successful series of meetings on historical subjects held since last autumn has included talks on such diverse subjects as the 'Shrimp-line', Frank Hornby, the Coastguard Service, The River Alt in pre-history, and finally the (soon to be opened) National Trust Asparagus Trail.

## Local involvement.

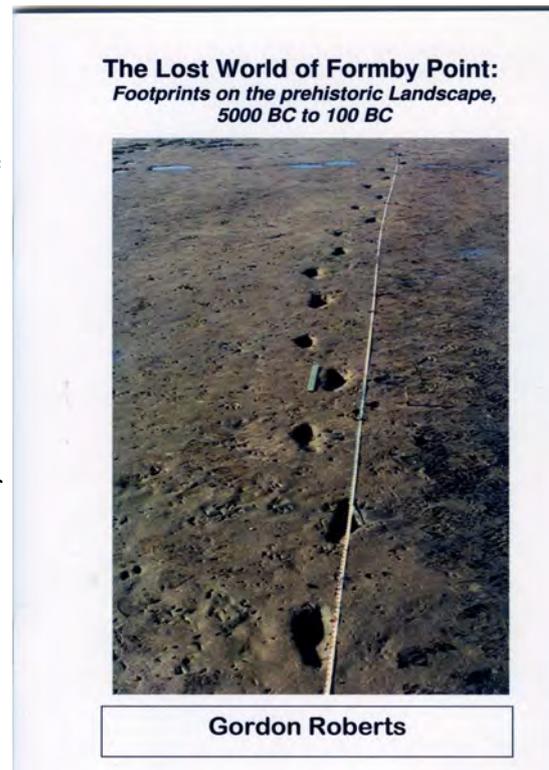
Ray Derricott and I have continued to attend meetings of the Formby Neighbourhood Plan working party, and have been able to contribute particularly on historical aspects, including the submission of a 'Local List' of buildings and structures of historical interest, not already listed.

## Conservation areas.

We have also suggested consideration be given to an application to have 'the village' centre (Chapel Lane and School Lane), designated as a conservation area. This would give more control over unsuitable development. It so happens that at the behest of residents in the area we have also been invited to assist a review of the condition of the Green Lane Conservation Area. This is something which we made a start on a year or two ago. Unfortunately, it was not proceeded with at that time due to other pressures.

## Ravenmeols Heritage Trails.

The 'exploratory' stage for this project having now passed, we have until the end of this year to finalise proposals. Our several years work has however produced a great deal of information not previously readily available and the possibility of producing a booklet, over and above trail guides is being considered. Finance for this will have to be found but that may be possible.



## Prehistoric footprints booklet..

Published just one year ago, this excellent publication, written by former local resident Gordon Roberts, sold very well and local bookshops have been requesting further copies. This being the case, it was decided by the committee to finance a further printing and an additional 500 copies are now available from local bookshops, at the National Trust and from ourselves. We would be grateful if members could publicise this.

## WW1 'Home Front' Study.

Work on this continues on a regular basis mainly by John Phillips and Tony Pawson, with the saved material being catalogued by Tony Bonney

# RAILWAY CROSSING PROBLEMS by Dave Skelton



*A bridge similar to that proposed for Fisherman's Path.*

Formby is a coastal community of approximately 32,000 residents, divided by its railway line. There are two stations in Formby: Formby Station at Formby Bridge, and Freshfield station at Victoria Road. There are three vehicle crossing points and two pedestrian/cycle crossing points. There used to be five vehicle crossing points but, following some fatalities, the then-unstaffed level crossings on Wicks Lane and Barkfield Lane were closed in the mid-twentieth century and two step-ramp footbridges of inaccessible design were installed to provide pedestrian access to those fit enough to use them. The demographic has changed markedly in the intervening period, and now Formby has an ageing population.

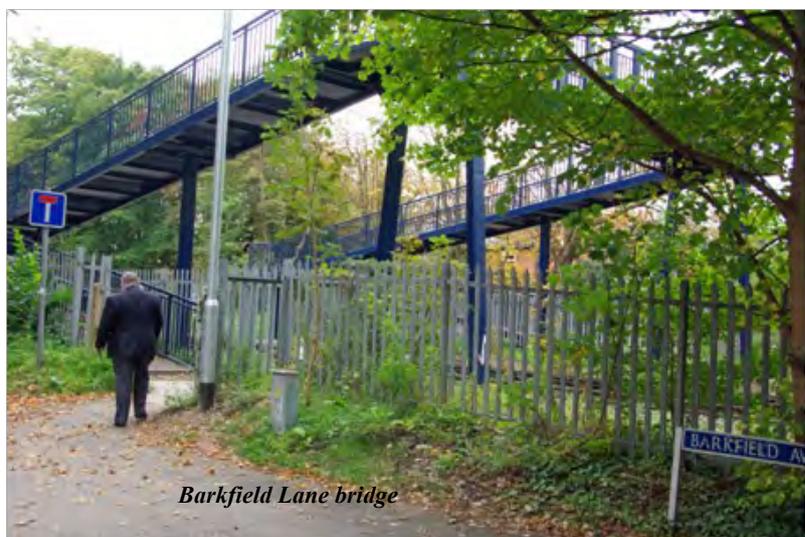
The level crossing at Duke Street was closed in about 1880 after "Formby Bridge" and the new Station and Ticket office, with steep flights of steps to the platforms, were constructed. This design means that Formby station is inaccessible to many. However, following over twenty year years of campaigning, lifts are now being installed and the Station will become

accessible in the Summer of 2015. Freshfield Station is accessible only by virtue of the highway level crossing at the ends of its platforms.

The, highway, manual level crossings at Ravenmeols Road/Queens Road, and at Victoria Road had their Signal Boxes removed in the 1990's, and remotely supervised and controlled crossing gates were installed, operated from a control room behind Sandhills Station.

A report to Sefton Council, prepared by Sefton Access Forum recommended that the bridges at Wicks Lane and Barkfield Lane should be dismantled and level crossings restored; equipped to the same standard as those at Ravenmeols Road and Victoria Road; guarded, controlled, and supervised by the crossing controllers at Sandhills. However, with Network Rails reluctance to pay the price to maintain access, or even upgrade safety at existing level crossings they are unlikely to invest to restore the access which once existed at these two crossing points. the two pedestrian/cycle crossing points, at the South end and North end of Formby respectively, are .....

( continued p 15).



*Barkfield Lane bridge*

# Secretary's Notes

The Society's AGM held on 14th May re-affirmed a further successful year following the strengthening of the Committee by the co-option of several new Committee Members following the last AGM. Welcome newcomers included John Phillips, David and Yvonne Irving and Andrew Pearce, former MEP formerly representing half a million people living in Merseyside and Cheshire at Strasbourg for ten years. All Committee Members but one (Howard Curtiss), have agreed to continue. John Phillips is now Chair, David Skelton continues as Treasurer with myself as Secretary (until December) and History Group Secretary for another year. After December we will need a new Hon. Secretary! John has now also taken over as Newsletter Editor.

Former Member Gordon Robert's 'Prehistoric Footprints' booklet was launched in May 2014, and copies having been given to all FCS members, rapidly sold out and so has now been reprinted.

A digital news sheet, 'Lighthouse,' edited by Andrew Pearce, was published and intended to run alongside Formby Civic News and be of interest to non-members but we have not had much feedback and it has not been repeated. Comparatively few of our members have divulged e-mail addresses!

Our Civic Day event in June was a 'Historic Formby' photograph display at the Gild Hall in cooperation with the Parish Council's preparations of the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan, for which Ray Derricott and myself have continue to work with the Parish Council.

Progress on the Ravenmeols Heritage Trails project has continued. Much information has been gathered on this attractive and least visited area of the coast, including an unexpected (romantic) association with the writer Beryl Bainbridge who lived in Formby when a girl! This information is now being edited in booklet format and should be finished by the end of this year. The future of the society is now more assured than it was a year ago but over and above our recent work with the Parish Council we need to get ourselves a higher public profile. One way of doing this is by working on and presenting a properly researched list of '**assets of community value**'. A useful beginning was a working lunch with Sarah James at the Freshfield Pub on 23<sup>rd</sup> March prior to which we looked at some possible buildings. A possible list was drawn up but needs more thought. We were very pleased to have Sarah here with us this for the AGM to tell us more about this project. R.A.Y.

## Are you having any digital problems? FCS help is at hand

In modern day life there is nothing so frustrating as when your computer starts to 'play up' and you just haven't got a clue whether it is your fault or that of the machine! Don't worry! Thanks to the Civic Society, help is at hand.

Tony Bonney & Noel Blundell are offering free help to our members on most matters digital.

*So, if you:*

- *are having trouble with your computer*
- *want advice on emails or on surfing the net*
- *have a digital camera and just wondered how to get the pictures on to your computer and mail them to your family or friends*
- *or how to move pictures from your emails to your computer*
- *have landed up with the Welsh version of the BBC*
- *are having trouble retuning your digital TV*
- *are wondering if the time has arrived to move to a laptop, an iPad or another tablet and you think they can help, then just give them a ring to talk through your problems and if necessary to arrange a home visit. They can't guarantee a fix but will do their very best.!*

# Assets of Community Value in Formby

The presentation by Sarah James of 'Civic Voice' at the AGM described how local groups in Formby could make use of a project called 'Community Right to Bid' that was introduced in 2012. Its aim is to help local communities to protect buildings and open spaces they value. It is relevant to all civic societies and community groups.

It means communities can ask their local council to list certain assets as being of value to the community. If an asset is listed and then comes up for sale, the new right will give communities that want it 6 months to put together a bid to buy it. This gives communities an increased chance to save much loved shops, pubs or other local facilities. It is not a failsafe mechanism as community groups may find them selves outbid or their offer to buy being refused. However, there are some good examples of successful initiatives in other parts of the country and is therefore something to be considered.

Parish councils or local community groups can nominate both privately and publicly owned assets which meet the definition of 'community value'.

## Assets might include:-

- Shops
- Pubs
- Community/Village Halls
- Nurseries and Children's Centres
- Health Centres and Surgeries
- Sport. Recreation and Cultural
- Parks and open green spaces
- Sports Grounds
- Theatres and Cinemas
- Swimming Pools and lidos
- Community Services
- Youth Centres

## The 'Formby Asparagus Trail' opened by National Trust



Work undertaken by the National Trust with strong support by FCS has finally resulted in a set of high quality information boards being placed around the present and old asparagus beds in Formby and the opening of a formal 'Asparagus Trail'. This new tourist and local residents' attraction tells the stories of some of the families who worked in this area to produce some of the best asparagus in the country. The trail takes us from the area where dunes

were first leveled at the beginning of the 20th century for asparagus cultivation and shows us where the self-styled 'Asparagus King', Jimmy Lowe, had his own very successful farm.

Details can be found on the National Trust website. The tour takes about an hour and a half to complete and the paths are suitable for walkers of all abilities. It starts at the beginning of the Woodland Walk at the National Trust site in Victoria Road, a little past the kiosk area.

**There will be a guided tour made available to all FCS members on Thursday 11th June, between 7pm - 9.30pm. It will be led by Andrew Brockbank, ending up at Larkhill Farm where participants will be able to buy a bunch of local asparagus if desired.**

## Formby Reminiscences:

# Laxton Cottage

**Laxton Cottage** has been a feature of Elbow Lane in the memory of Formby people alive today until it was replaced this year by three new houses. It was not always known as 'Laxton Cottage' – as with so many houses in the past its name changed with a new occupier or owner.

With its demolition there were many memories of what it had been like in the recent past. We have been fortunate to receive a lovely photograph of the cottage passed on by **Elizabeth Rodway**, née Aindow, who lived in the cottage up until 1957 when the thatched section was demolished.

It was at that point that the cottage was re-named 'Laxton Cottage': it is thought that it was given this name because of the apple tree growing in the garden.

Not only did Elizabeth send the Civic Society the photograph, but also the following memories of her childhood in the cottage. Our understanding of what life was like for many people is enriched by such reminiscences.....

*"When we lived there, the end of the thatched section (white-washed in the photo) was virtually uninhabitable. It had two storeys, a lower one which always called the 'workroom', possibly a hangover from the shoemaker days. This was used as a storeroom and playroom for us, and the upper storey which was used mainly for storing apples (these were the days when you could only get fruit in season).*

*It had two storeys, a lower one which always called the 'workroom', possibly a hangover from the shoemaker days.*

*"The middle of the thatched section was our kitchen (and only living room), which had an open fire and range where Mum did most of the cooking. There was also a small scullery with sink and gas ring.*

*"The two-storey section with tiled roof comprised one room on each floor. The ground floor was Mum and Dad's bedroom, and upstairs was*

*My youngest sister was three when we moved, so she was probably still in a cot..*

*I don't think there can have been room for four single beds. One of my memories is of being off school feeling poorly and Mum carrying a shovelful of live coals from the kitchen below to make a fire in the small fireplace in our bedroom.*

*"There was no electricity in the house. The main room had a gas mantle; elsewhere we used small paraffin lamps. The batteries for the wireless had to be taken to 'Needhams' in the Village for re-charging. They were so large that I can remember pushing them along in my sisters' pushchair".*

*"There was no bathroom or even hot water; baths were taken in a tin bath in front of the range on a Friday night. Mum had to heat the water in the 'copper' out in the wash-house at the back, and carry it through in a bucket. Of course, there was no indoor plumbing and the toilet was a brick-built privy at the bottom of the garden, almost up to the boundary with the Methodist Church. In later years the Council used to send a tanker to empty it, but I think Dad must have had to do it in the early years – not a very pleasant job!"*

*"The garden was larger than it has been in recent years, as there was a large grassy area at the side, which reached all the way to Duke Street. Behind the cottage and at the other side was room for a lawn to play on with a swing, a large apple tree and productive vegetable patch, along with a chicken run. The chickens kept us supplied with eggs, both during the laying season and out of season, thanks to Mum preserving them in isinglass in a cupboard under the stairs."*



# The Summer Programme

*Are you going to join other members in taking part in any of the many and varied activities planned by Reg Yorke for what looks like a particularly interesting programme for the summer of 2015? Remember that you can join in with friends even if they are non-members.*

**Thursday June 11th - 7pm till 9.30pm**

**National Trust Asparagus Trail walk**

Led by Andrew Brockbank, it will end up at Larkhill Farm where participants can buy a bunch of Formby asparagus, if desired. People can then either disperse from the farm or alternatively walk back to the car park at Victoria Road (add an extra 20 minutes).

**Saturday June 20th - 7pm start**

**Civic Day. Guided visit to Formby-by-the-Sea.**

This forgotten aspect of Formby history, which is very much at the heart of our Ravenmeols Heritage Trails Project and now refreshed by recently acquired information about the (little known) association with Beryl Bainbridge. The failure of the development of a fully fledged resort is something we can now as a Society be grateful for! Yet, why did it not succeed? Meet at Lifeboat Road car park at 7pm

**Tuesday July 14th ; - visit to Dunham Massey Hall (a National Trust property)**

Leave Formby 9am by coach, arrive 10am Dunham Massey Hall, Altringham Cheshire; 10am. Entry Free with National Trust Pass, (standard entry £12). To mark the centenary of the First World War, the clock is being turned back to the time when Dunham Massey was Stamford Military Hospital, offering a refuge from the trenches. Visitors can discover what life was like for the



family, patients and staff in the ward, operating theatre and recreation room.

**Thursday July 23rd; 7pm**

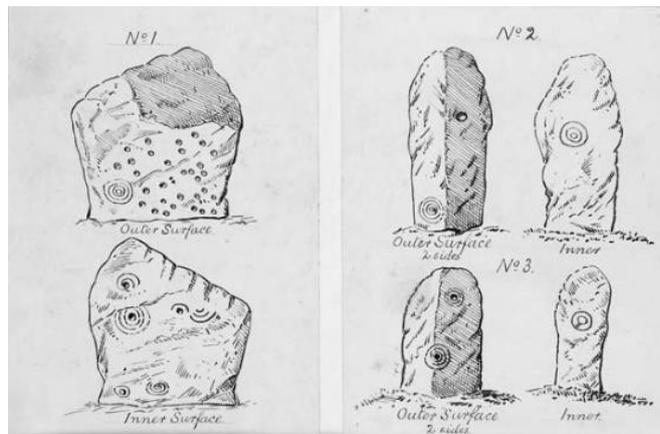
**Waterloo Walk, (Historical Aspects)**

Led by James Gentles.; meet up outside the Royal Hotel (at the junction of Marine Terrace and Great George's Road). We will amble up towards Beach Lawn before returning through the seafront gardens to our starting point. The houses we'll be passing are all C19th and well worth seeing. We will be stopping at a few where someone of interest lived and will give some information on them. The gardens, from the 1930s, are of some architectural and decorative interest. There is also a lot of social history attached to them.

**Thursday August 20th Freshfield Dune Heath;**

A 'wild-life walk' will be led by **Fiona Whitfield**. Meet at entrance opposite Fisherman's Path crossing at 7 pm.

**Friday August, 21st, starting at 6.30pm; Visit to the 'Calder Stones', (See below); Calderstones Mansion**



(Above) WWI Soldiers at Dunham Massey

# *Wildlife Notes, Autumn 2014—Spring 2015*

## by Phil Smith



Following the driest September ever recorded, autumn and winter rainfall was well below average in our region, leading to the lowest late winter water-table in the dunes since 1997/98. By early spring, few of our coastal wetlands held surface water. This does not augur well for our hard-pressed **Natterjack Toads** who rely on winter recharge of the water-table to flood their breeding pools.

As usual, I spent much of my spare time during the winter writing reports on summer studies, especially the mammoth coastwide volunteer survey of **Japanese Rose**. Mounting concerns about the rapid spread of

this alien shrub in the countryside were not eased when the BBC TV presenter Monty Don was shown enthusiastically planting **Japanese Rose** during *Gardener's World* and then "highly recommending" it for hedging.

Walks through the dunes in October were rewarded by occasional butterflies, including the latest **Wall** I have seen. Flowering **Atlantic Ivy** in Ravenmeols Woods attracted the usual **Red Admirals** and **Commas**, though a **Painted Lady** here was much more unusual. Fence posts near Asparagus Cottage were swarming with **Harlequin**

**Ladybirds** and their spectacular larvae. This non-native beetle has only been seen in our region for a couple of years and is rapidly spreading north.

October's star bird was a **Cetti's Warbler** that turned up in the reed-bed next to the R. Alt at Hightown. Although it was singing loudly in the reeds, a sighting of this notorious skulker eluded me. An unassuming little brown bird with a white eye-stripe, **Cetti's Warbler** used to be seen mostly around the Mediterranean but it then moved north, first appearing in Britain in 1961.

Volunteer "buckthorn bashes" continued during October and November, with a total of 26 local enthusiasts turned out to clear invasive **Sea Buckthorn** from dunes and slacks near Sands Lake, Ainsdale. This work continued on a smaller scale through the winter.

Easily the best find of November was a stunning **Great Grey Shrike** spotted by Tim Vaughan near Cabin Hill. It was actively flying between fence



*Hybrid Gull*  
*Ainsdale*

posts and bushes and even flew onto Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve, being counted for the reserve list. It is over 30 years since I last saw one here.

Gales in early December pushed large numbers of gulls inshore to roost between Ainsdale and Birkdale. These included a large dark-mantled, pink-legged gull that I couldn't immediately identify. Photographs were widely circulated, the general consensus being that it was probably a hybrid between **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, rather than an unlikely **Vega Gull** from eastern Siberia. It certainly caused me a lot of head-scratching.

Cattle are now being used for conservation grazing in winter on Ainsdale Sandhills Local

Nature Reserve, so I went to see how the 15-strong herd of placid **Shorthorns** and **Belted Galloways** were getting on. They were certainly having the desired effect, opening up the vegetation in the slacks and even creating small areas of bare ground on dune crests.

Back home, I was much entertained by a flock of up to 15 cheerful **House Sparrows** coming to food just outside my lounge window. Once abundant, this

charming bird declined by about 70% between 1977 and 2008, though populations seem to have levelled off since 2009.

In late January, I attended a West Lancashire Wildlife guided walk at Marshside, timed to take advantage of a 9.9m tide. The old sand-extraction road brought us within range of several thousand waders, mostly **Knot**, with a scatter of **Grey Plover**, **Redshank**, etc. A large roost of **Cormorants** lined a sand-bank, while groups of elegant **Pintails** flew overhead. Hundreds of **Skylarks** were harassed by a dashing **Merlin**, a few **Twite** could be heard calling and a **Marsh Harrier** patrolled in the distance. The RSPB hide gave close views of a variety of ducks, including **Shovelers** with their ridiculously large bills.



*House Sparrow*  
*Hayward Court*

## *Phil Smith 's Wildlife Notes continued.....*

A visit to the National Trust's Victoria Road **Red Squirrel** reserve found several of these delightful creatures entertaining the visitors. Surveys suggest that numbers have almost recovered to levels achieved before the parapox outbreak of 2007/08. Our squirrels have the dark-coloured fur of the continental subspecies, lacking white-tipped hairs in the tail and ear-tufts characteristic of the British race. There is ongoing debate about their origin. One

suggestion is that they escaped in the 1940s from a captive group of continental **Red Squirrels** kept in a Formby garden. Certainly, they couldn't have been here before pine trees were planted from the 1890s onwards.



### *Toads' behaviour I had not seen before*



Despite their low level after the dry winter, the heath ponds attracted lots of **Common Frogs** in early March. I was trying to count them when a Woodvale aeroplane flew over and about 40 males comically stuck their heads out of the water, obviously attracted by the sound of the engines. This is a behaviour I had not seen before, though it is well known that male **Natterjacks** call in response to overflying aircraft.

### *Reprieve for Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls breeding on the Ribble Estuary*

If like me you are a gull-fan there was some good news in March. The High Court found grounds to block a cull of **Lesser Black-backed** and **Herring Gulls** breeding on the Ribble Estuary National Nature Reserve. Last year, the Secretary of State allowed BAE Systems to start culling hundreds of gulls, which were claimed to pose a threat to aircraft using the Warton Aerodrome. However, the RSPB argued that **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were "under significant pressure" in the UK and that the cull was too high.

*My first wildlife notes in March 2007 mentioned a project to map our local dragonflies and damselflies. Eight years later, this came to fruition with the publication of **The Dragonflies of Lancashire and North Merseyside** by the Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society. Details on how to obtain a copy of this attractive and informative book can be found on the Fauna Society website.*

# Annual General Meeting held 14th May 2015

*The Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 14th May was an opportunity for all members to gather together and share the reports made by committee members about our activities over the past year and plans for the future.*

Reg Yorke gave the Chairman's Report. He described how the Sibley Collection had been transferred to the Atkinson Gallery in Southport where it would be kept in more appropriate conditions than were available to the Civic Society in Formby. They would be preserved professionally and would be made available to a wider audience. Dr. Yorke said, "Having personally known Muriel for many years, I feel sure she would very much have approved."

He referred to Gordon Roberts' booklet, 'Prehistoric Footsteps'. FCS. 500 copies; when they sold out quickly, an additional 500 were re-printed. Copies are still available from the Society, as are copies of 'Sand and Sea: Sefton's Coastal Heritage' at the remaindered price of £4.

The Society contribution to Civic Day in June 2014 had been a

photographic display entitled 'Historic Formby'.

Progress on the Ravenmeols Heritage Trails project had continued and it had been discovered there was an association with the Formby-born author, Beryl Bainbridge.

The Society has continued to work in an advisory capacity with Formby Parish Council and organized a 'Placecheck' exercise in January 2015.

The committee has become aware of a number of ideas and initiatives for local action. These include ideas from Civic Voice.

The Chairman also described how he and Ray Derricott had worked over the year with Formby Parish Council and had given advice on local heritage listings.

The website continues to be run and well-visited by people from across the globe, and thanks were given to Noel Blundell for the quality of the work he does in ensuring its continuing success. Also, thanks were given to Tony Bonney for the contribution he makes with work he does overseeing the photographic and cuttings archive hosted on the

Flickr website and such a valuable asset for members and also for the general public.

Dr. Yorke spoke about how FCS is considering the creation of an interpretive panel for the Dune Heath relating to the airmen who lost their lives during World War II during active service at Woodvale.

The election for officers for 2015-2016 was then undertaken. Dr. Yorke stood down as Chairman and John Phillips was elected unopposed to replace him for the coming year. Reg agreed to stay on as secretary and to look after the History Group until December 2015. John wants to attract more members to the Society and involve more existing members in our activities. He thanked Reg Yorke warmly for the huge range and quality of the work he has done for Formby through our Civic Society and was looking forward to continuing to work with him.

Following the elections, Sarah James of 'Civic Voice' made a lively presentation on 'The Civic Movement — Assets of Community Value'. She was very warmly received though not without some valid questions

## *FCS Photographic Archive on Flickr by Tony Bonney*

One of the first ports of call for anyone wishing to research the history of Formby—or indeed simply to travel down Memory Lane L37 — should be the FCS Archive and Flickr collection of images on the its website —

<http://www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk/resources.html>

- Only recently we have received a request for information about someone who was evacuated to Formby during WWII and who enjoyed many happy hours at Formby Lawn Tennis Club. Her name was Eileen Dunn and her details are printed below. Also, a Formby girl now married and living in Belgium wrote to ask for prints of some of the images to use as a birthday present for a friend. She wrote, “I have really enjoyed looking at the photos on your Society's page; it is a fantastic resource. Keep up the good work!” With local and family history increasingly popular these days, this is a really valuable asset. Here are some examples of what you can find there.



*Above; The corner of Chapel Lane and Halsall Lane; n c.1912 and in 2011*



*The site of Reynolds Shop (demolished in 1973) taken in 1969 and the preparation for a new M&S store in 2003*

*Do you remember ....EILEEN DUNN? (see Right ).*

*Peter Trewavas of Hamilton, New Zealand, wrote to us to see if anyone in FCS or beyond could remember his late mother, Eileen Dunn, who was evacuated to Formby during WW2 at the request of her employer (ICI). She was born in London but enjoyed a wonderful time in Formby during her evacuation. Opposite is an excellent snap of her with members of the Formby Tennis Club during wartime. Eileen Dunn appears is 5<sup>th</sup> from right in the front row. The woman 2<sup>nd</sup> from left in the front row is her good friend Ara Gibson, whose father was a bank manager in Formby at the time. By all accounts they had a great time in Formby. The back of the photo simply says “Formby Tennis Club”. The other photo opposite shows Eileen with Mrs. Simonds, with whom she lodged whilst living in Formby.*

*For anyone wishing to make sense of Formby's recent history and the changes in our town over the past century and more, a valuable starting point would be the following publication:*

*“Formby: Then and Now” by Barbara and Reg Yorke*



# RAILWAY CROSSING PROBLEM (continued from p3)



*Fisherman's Path Crossing*

.....at the western end of Hoggs Hill Lane and approximately 750 metres north of Freshfield station, up to Montegue Road up to Fisherman's Path. This crossing is also a livestock and occasional vehicle crossing point. It is the only route to Golf Cottage, a residential property. This crossing became notorious in August 2014, when student Yasmin Jones lost her life, trying to rescue the dog she was minding. It had managed to get on to the track through the gaps in the steel seven bar gate guarding the crossing. Network Rail still had not fitted the gate with mesh to prevent the incursion of small animals onto the track. Instead, they sought the least expensive permanent solution to the problem and applied for planning permission to erect a stepped footbridge to replace the level crossing. This ignored the access needs of local residents and less able ramblers and cyclists.



*Hoggs Hill Lane crossing.*

Fortunately, the Sefton Planning Department, buoyed up by local opposition to the scheme recommended refusal of planning permission, stating; "the proposed development will have a detrimental effect on accessibility as it will preclude use of the walking and cycling network for a significant proportion of users and have a detrimental impact on the links to the Sefton Coastal Path and the National Cycle Network as well as restricting its use for many people with mobility issues including those with pushchairs. The proposal is therefore contrary to UDP policies CS3, and AD2 and the provisions of the NPPF, in particular paragraph 32". This led to Network Rail withdrawing the planning application on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, the day before the Planning Committee were to consider it. My personal opinion is that this was a strategic decision. I believe that Network Rail's response to the issue was inappropriate and that there remain in Formby two points of danger for pedestrians, particularly young adventurous people. Whether by accident or deliberate action, railway tracks can be accessed at these points and people exposed to mortal danger. The issue of rail safety in Formby is a Civic challenge which still needs addressing but in a manner which takes account of the needs of local people!



*Formby Station fenced off, ready for the lift s*

# FCS Programme; June - December 2015

## Summer Programme

- Thursday June 11th; 7pm - 9.30pm; *NT Asparagus Trail walk*; Andrew Brockbank will lead walk ending up at Larkhill Farm (where participants can buy a bunch if desired.).
- Saturday June 20th; Civic Day. *10am - 4pm ; Display of work of the FCS in Formby Village.*  
*7pm Exploration of Formby-by-the-Sea; 'The Resort that never was'.*
- Tuesday July 14th; 9am (pre-booking needed) *Visit to Dunham Massey*; Leave Formby 9am by coach, arrive 10 am Dunham, Massey Hall, Altringham, Cheshire;
- Thursday, July 23rd, 7pm; *Waterloo Walk, (Historical Aspects)* - with. James Gentles.
- Thursday 20th August 7pm; *Freshfield Dune Heath*; Walk to be led by Fiona Whitfield
- Thursday 27th August, 6.30pm; ( Pre-booking needed) *Visit to the prehistoric Calder Stones, Mansion House, Calderstones Park. (With Archaeologist Ron Cowell).*
- Thursday 3rd September, Evening 'Get-together', 6.30pm Cross House , Cross Green. 6.30pm. (Pre-Booking)

## Winter Programme,

**(all meetings start at 8pm, at Ravenmeols Community Centre).**

- 10th September *'The Bee problem and how we can help'*; Ben Hargreaves.
- 8th October *'Lord Leverhulme'*; Julie Kershaw.
- 12th November *'World War 1; The Home Front,'* John Phillips.
- 10th December *'Old Formby'*; Reg Yorke.

## Officers of the Society 2015

<i>Chairman;</i> John Phillips, chairman@formbycivicsociety.org.uk	<i>(Acting) Hon Secretary;</i> Dr Reginald Yorke, 3 Wicks Lane, L37 3JE; Tel 872187	<i>Hon Treasurer;</i> Mr David Skelton, 2 Shaw Crescent, L37 8DA Tel 01704 875033
<i>History Group Secretary;</i> Dr Reginald Yorke,	<i>Minutes Secretary;</i> Mrs Jean Beer	<i>Distribution Secretary;</i> Mr Tony Bonney, membership@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

## Committee Members

Mrs Jean Beer, Mr Colin Cooke, Dr. R. Derricott, Mr Andrew Pearce,  
David Irving, Yvonne Irving.